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UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

A/CONF.157/AFRM/11
3 December 1992

ENGLISH
Original: ARABIC

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Regional Meeting for Africa
Tunis, 2-6 November 1992
Agenda item 6

CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

Recommendations submitted by the Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights concerning the World Conference on Human Rights

(The Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights requested the Secretary-General of the World Conference on Human Rights to submit these recommendations to the Regional Meeting for Africa. In response to that request, the recommendations are annexed hereto.)

GE.92-14815 (E)

Recommendations of the Egyptian Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights to the Regional Meeting for Africa for the World Conference on Human Rights

1. It is no longer possible or acceptable to speak of the protection and promotion of universally recognized human rights or of endeavours to implement the International Covenants on Human Rights without also referring to the non-governmental organizations and associations which are assuming the heaviest workload in this regard; otherwise, everything that we say would be merely empty words and reiterations of bombastic phrases devoid of any real meaning.

2. While speaking on the subject of agenda item 6, we wish to emphasize the right to freedom of association and organization and the need to issue a clear and explicit declaration, rather than mere recommendations.

3. Our Arab and African peoples are faced with many violations of human rights, as well as obstacles to the promotion and realization of human rights.

4. The obstruction of the promotion of human rights is largely attributable to the restrictions, laws and effective embargoes that are imposed on non-governmental organizations and private associations operating in the field of human rights, development and the environment, including associations for the defence of women's rights and the protection of children.

5. The non-governmental organizations firmly uphold the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights concerning freedom of association and believe that Governments must amend their legislation on association in a manner compatible with the International Covenants. Governments must also refrain from interfering with, or imposing any de jure or de facto embargo on, non-governmental organizations.

6. The non-governmental organizations recommend that the United Nations and its bodies concerned with human rights should give regional and national organizations ample opportunities to participate more extensively in human rights activities through association or registration with the United Nations and practical participation in specific programmes for the application of the Covenants and procedures without any complex restrictions. In fact, the United Nations should endeavour to protect non-governmental organizations from all forms of embargo and de jure or de facto restrictions at the national or regional level.

7. We also wish to point out that, on the basis of a proposal by the non-governmental organizations, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights submitted a recommendation to the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in which it emphasized the right to freedom of association and called for removal of all the legal obstacles that are impeding the exercise of that right. This question has been the subject of lengthy discussions in the African Commission.

8. We also wish to draw attention to the drafting of a declaration on the right and responsibilities of individuals, groups and social organizations in regard to the promotion and protection of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms (E/CN.4/1992/53 and Corr. 1, part I, arts. 2 and 3).

9. For our part, we call upon regional intergovernmental organizations to grant consultative and observer status to regional and national non-governmental organizations with a view to promoting cooperation between the two parties in such a way as to permit the formulation of an effective regional human rights order that will be compatible with the developments and achievements made at the international human rights level.

10. To this end, we call upon the League of Arab States to modify the procedures that are preventing Arab non-governmental organizations from participating effectively in the field of human rights. The requirement for governmental approval of such organizations should be abolished in order to make the League's regulations in this regard more consistent with those applied by the United Nations, since the League is refusing to grant consultative status to Arab non-governmental organizations such as the Arab Organization for Human Rights and the Arab Lawyers' Union, which enjoy consultative status with the United Nations. This is a grave disparity.

11. We stress that Governments should be called upon to refrain from engaging in practices and making allegations with a view to prohibiting cooperation between international human rights organizations and regional and national organizations, particularly in regard to financial and technical assistance and the exchange of information concerning human rights violations.

12. We stress the need for the United Nations to provide large-scale assistance in order to make it easier for individuals and organizations to obtain information and reports from non-governmental organizations and to facilitate the dissemination, for information purposes, of the important reports published by international, regional and local non-governmental organizations in keeping with the right of individuals and groups to obtain and disseminate information, as stated in the draft declaration on the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups (ibid., part II, arts. 1 and 2).

13. We wish to submit these recommendations to the World Conference on Human Rights, which is to be held at Vienna, on the matters to which we have referred.

14. Finally, we wish to emphasize that, while we are planning the future of mankind and the future of human rights on the threshold of the twenty-first century, Governments can no longer continue to impede the development of human rights or the mechanisms conducive to their realization.